

Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission Meeting

May 8, 2014

Special Location: Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce ,
Lenoir Rhyne meeting room 3rd Floor

Member Attendees: Chair Pattiy Torno; Woodfin Mayor Jerry Vebaun; Pam Turner; Carleton Collins; Peter Sprague; Karl Koon; George Morosani; Ricky Silver; Joe Ferikes; Dan Hitchcock;

Absent from meeting: Vice Chair Stephanie Brown; Asheville City Mayor Esther Manheimer; Buncombe County Commissioner David King; Cindy Weeks;

Staff: Stephanie Monson; Asheville City Manager Gary Jackson; Transportation Planner Dan Baechtold; Transportation Director Ken Putnam; Finance Director Barbara Whitehorn; Director of Strategic Planning and Multimodal Development Cathy Ball

Other attendees: Rick Tipton, NC DOT Project Manager; David Johnson; David Nutter; Dave Campbell; Tom Gallagher, Kate O Hara; Timothy Sadler

Chair Pattiy Torno opened the meeting at 4:05 pm.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

- The meeting did not have a quorum upon opening. A quorum was established at 4. 30 pm.

UPDATES:

Ad Hoc Subcommittees

- Planning and Design Review Committee – Carleton Collins, Chair:
 - Committee met May 7.
 - Committee used a current staff level (minor work) design review project as exercise to get to know guidelines better and share ideas.
 - Potential upcoming retail project next to WNC Tile on Swannanoa River Road
 - Discussed more long term ideas for improving process
- Town of Woodfin Storm Update- Mayor Jerry Vebaun:
 - Received 5 inches of rain in 2 ½ hours; Weaverville Highway looked like a stream
 - Heaviest up near Versant/Bearverdam; not all areas as negatively affected
 - 11 families displaced; Eblen working with many of them
 - Damage to NCDOT and Town property
 - Drainage culverts collared; improvements being considered
- Networking Subcommittee – Peter Sprague, Chair:
 - Small meeting of two on May 5th.
 - Committee researched property record and visited site for potential investment on Swannanoa River Road (east).

NEW BUSINESS:

RADTIP (River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project) - Dan Baechtold, Project Manager

- Starting the final phase of engineering and predevelopment work for the project
- City Council approved a sizable budget for this phase
- The design and engineering team is mostly the same individuals from the initial planning and design project
- Consultants have flown the corridor and a ground survey will occur soon, with notices sent to all affected property owners regarding the work being done
- Soil drilling/samples will then be taken for geotechnical analysis
- Data collection including work to guide analysis for utility location be enabled by this work
- Consultants will prioritize analysis of Craven Street Bridge and NS trestle bridge regarding compatibility with trucks, in order to align with New Belgium construction and operation schedule
- Major milestones:
 - November 2014- final preliminary design complete. That includes analysis of Craven Street bridge, and any part of the design that is horizontal.
 - December 2015- final design, with ability to create plats and engage in right of way and land acquisition portion of project. There will be a public hearing after this date.
- Commission Questions and Discussion:

Q: Does Norfolk Southern have concerns about potentially changing the grade under that bridge?

A: We don't think they have concerns with changing the grade as long as it doesn't affect their operations or the integrity of the structure.

Q: Will you have to move that very large power pole on southwest corner of Craven/Riverside intersection?

A: unknown at this time.

Q It would seem in poor form for the public to spend a significant amount of money on improving the roadway and adjacent land and not get better poles throughout the corridor. E.g. metal or aesthetically pleasant power poles. Undergrounding utilities is a known challenge but we still encourage staff to discuss with Duke to do anything possible to improve the design of the system in that area.

A: staff will continue to work with Duke on possibilities for partnerships that improve this project.

Wrap Up: The Commission asked Baechtold to engage with the AARRC Planning and Design Review subcommittee on a regular basis throughout this project, as part of the AARRC charge is to monitor the implementation of plans. Baechtold also agreed to come back to AARRC regular meeting in November with a project update. The Commission offered to assist with outreach via their networking committee.

Craven Street Project Update- Gary Jackson, City Manager

- Project is the complete streets buildout on Craven, the public parking for greenway on west side of French Broad, water line upgrades, transit shelter and stream restoration for public areas around New Belgium's planned brewery and visitors center
- Project construction estimates were around \$4 Million: lowest bid opened today was \$6.6 million
- Points to new realities for the construction industry: economy has picked back up, contractors have a variety of projects to choose from, cost is going up. Staff taking this into consideration for current and future project estimates
- Need to strengthen federal, state and local partnership on economic development, and add other partners, to identify and procure additional sources of funding to fill the gap.

Administrative Items continued: Consideration of meeting minutes

Chairman Torno asked for a motion to approve minutes of the March and April AARRC meetings; so moved by Jerry Vehaun, second by Pam Turner, approved unanimously.

I-26 Corridor, Riverfront Considerations – Rick Tipton, NCDOT

- Public Meeting next week, Monday May 12, drop in, 4 pm- 7 pm at the Renaissance Hotel downtown.
- DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Study) for preferred alternative to be released in summer 2015
- FEIS/ROD (Final EIS, Record of Decision) in summer 2016
- If funded, ROW work late 2018; construction letting for prioritized section not expected until late 2020
- Goal of today's meeting: Chairman asked Tipton to show animation (not updated, does not accurately reflect current alternative 3c) to commission to help visualize impact to riverfront
- Commission Discussion:
 - Commission would like to see updated visualizations that more accurately reflect the option being pursued by NCDOT;
 - Commission notes that the change from current, over the French Broad River, is significant (many more lanes, width, concrete proposed from today's Smoky Park-Captain Bowen Bridge);
 - Members noted that when the currently proposed roadway meets Riverside Drive, just past the RADTIPs northern project end point, it appears that many acres of riverfront will not be developable. Tipton confirmed that any of the land that would sit under that road (it is elevated in that section, to meet the grade of current i-26) would not be eligible for any development except park or greenway, maybe parking. Commission noted that area needs to not become dead space that costs the city taxpayers money, not only in loss in tax revenue/development potential but in the likely social issues that would require calls for service. Commission would like to know how high (up in the air, elevation) this road will be over the west side of Riverside Drive.

- Commission asked when the funding and rankings would be finalized, and Tipton suggested that should be complete in the fall of 2014.

Finance and Budget, City Riverfront Investment – Cathy Ball, Assistant City Manager :

- City added 2 cents to the tax rate last year to fund investments in economic development (non maintenance capital projects), and 1 cent addition for maintenance
- First year city has implemented this strategy, starting with existing projects like Eagle Market Street project, Azalea transformation, RADTIP
- City will build on this newer strategy by adopting geographic investment areas (MSDs or Municipal Service Districts) that enable the City to finance capital improvements through Special Obligation Bonds. Intention is not for additional taxing areas or districts, intention is to stretch taxpayer dollars via and alternative to financing capital investments through pay as you go.
- There are over \$200 million in projects that are on the 5 year Economic Development Capital Improvements Projects list; this financing mechanism allows us to get closer to actually doing all of them – partnerships/grants are part of the strategy, potentially funding \$80 million of that \$200 total (over 5 years).
- Finance Director creating new debt service fund that will accrue over time; cash flows significantly improved in year 2 of strategy
- This use of SOBs is a best practice across cities in North Carolina. Will allow the City to focus on accelerating the implementation of targeted investments that will make a significant difference to the community.
- Next milestone occurs spring 2015, council and staff to engage with property owners in outreach effort, all owners in investment districts notified of intent.

AARRC Annual Retreat: Chairman Torno

- The current plans for the retreat are now altered as the Mayor and Commission David King have conflicts in the afternoon. Instead of 10 am until 7 pm, the commission has agreed to now meet from 8.30 am until 5 pm, with a reception including drinks to occur immediately following the event for those interested. The new timing will be approximately:
 - Retreat starts at Chamber at 8.15 am with continental breakfast served
 - 8: 30 am Group reviews large format map of area and current projects and initiatives until 10 am
 - 10 am Group uses trolley to visit two projects in riverfront (and tour)
 - 11.30 Group explores pedestrian connectivity issues at Amboy Road Bridge, and has lunch at French Broad River Park Gazebo, with opportunity to explore part of the future multi use path connection from the park to New Belgium Brewing's new site.
 - 1 pm – 2: 45 pm Group uses trolley to visit two projects in riverfront (and tour)
 - Back at the Chamber by 3 pm
 - Guest speaker and visioning for 2015 at 3:15 pm-4:45 pm
 - Reception with drinks on the river at 5 pm.

- More information on agenda and logistics, including potential off-site parking with trolley pick up and drop off, to be announced by Monson soon.
- The Commission will still- in addition to this retreat- hold their regular meeting as scheduled on June 12, 2014 at 4 pm.

Public Comment

David Nutter relayed that Councilman Marc Hunt has been distributing a video link about protected bike lanes that is very informative

Tom Gallagher respectfully noted that 6 lanes rather than 8 for I-26 should still be on the table for discussion.

The next meeting of the AARRC will be the annual retreat on June 3, 2014. The meeting includes tours and locations outside of the Chamber of Commerce. Contact staff Steph Monson Dahl at smonson@ashevillenc.gov or (828) 337 -4111 for more information.

The Commission will hold their regular meeting on June 12, 2014 at 4:00 pm in the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Board Room.